

FEMALE EDUCATION.

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THE influence of the softer sex upon society is now so generally acknowledged, that any argument to prove this to be the case, would be useless and out of place. We can only confess the fact and rejoice in it! We rejoice in it, because it is, for the most part, exerted for beneficial ends. We see, that where female influence is the most freely admitted, there will be the best feelings of humanity most successfully cultivated. Now, this is tantamount to admitting that the gentle sex exercises its power wisely and beneficially, and we wish to acknowledge this; we wish to do full justice to the admirable virtues, to the high principles of woman. Predestined from the creation of the world to be the companion and helpmate of man, through all ages, history has furnished us with abundant proofs that woman has fulfilled the intentions of the bountiful and merciful God, who gave her to man to be the guerdon of his merits, the sweetener of his toils, the joyful and sympathizing partner of his hours of gladness, the sure and certain refuge to whom he might fly, without a doubt, without a fear, for comfort and consolation, when the clouds of adversity, the frowns of a hard-hearted world should beset him. Yes! when cold looks, indifference, and mistrust, meet him on every side, when poverty, sickness, and old age, overtake him, man still has one Ebenezer, one rock, sure and steadfast, one well of sweet water, one green oasis in the desert of life—he has the never-failing, wondrous love and tenderness, springing in perennial freshness from the heart of woman!

Now, while acknowledging to the fullest extent the generally beneficent and kindly influences of woman's love upon society, we must be careful to remember, that though the soil be fruitful, weeds may spring,—nay, will spring; and it is a matter of universal import that the naturally glorious characters of the female sex be not lost from the want of cultivation, or destroyed by an improper and mischievous system.

The only legitimate object of education is to enable the individual properly to fulfil his or her duties. Woman by the decree and ordinance of her Maker, was intended to be a helpmate to man, and we think that we are correct in assuming that, by the term, something more is expressed than the duties of a wife. We believe that the whole human family is implied by the term man. When a young woman has so far completed her education, that it is no longer the principal business of her life, and returns to her father's house, the duties for the due performance of which, she alone is responsible, commence. She must be capable of affording her share to the *agremens*, comforts and pleasures of the domestic hearth. She must be ready to sympathize with the joys and sorrows of the various inmates. She must be able

to discourse sensibly and modestly upon the different subjects that form the topics of conversation in the general circle. If the rank and situation of her family be even of the highest grade, she must, nevertheless, have a *correct idea* of the value of money. It is not meant by this, that it is absolutely necessary that she should be acquainted with the cost of every article of domestic use, but that she should have some general knowledge of what style of living can be supported by incomes varying considerably above and below the expenditure of her own family. Nothing can be more mortifying than the constant aiming of young ladies for expensive luxuries, which, from the circumstances of the family, it would be unwise to grant, but which, nevertheless, are often allowed at the expense of serious inconvenience and the self-denial of comforts, and even necessities, on the part of the members of the family.

How often does it happen that sullenness, tears, and anger on the part of a young girl follow the refusal of her unreasonable wishes. Now, we think too well of the female heart to believe that these annoyances proceed from bad feeling. On the contrary, we think they proceed from defects in early education. A girl at school is seldom taught any thing concerning household expenses. She generally has some notions of the means of the family, but she is ignorant of the expenses attendant upon its particular station in society. Perhaps she may have a young female friend, whose family appear in much the same style as her own. She sees that this friend indulges in the various luxuries of life to an extent denied to herself; and it does not enter into her mind to consider that the wealth of her friend's family may, perhaps, be double that of her own. Another cause of this wilful conduct is, that she has not been taught the habit of self-denial. She has never been made to understand that it is a *duty* to forego her own inclinations when incompatible with those of others. Generosity and self-denial may have been applauded as virtues, but have not been inculcated as paramount duties. The consequence is, that in after life she may practice both, but at the same time, consider them as works of supererogation.

Another duty closely allied to self-denial is obedience. In these days, this word seems harsh, but there is no other word that will impress that duty which is imposed on the sex, not by man, but by a higher power. We fully acknowledge that this duty is strongly inculcated at school, but it is only the duty of obeying teachers and governesses. Obedience to parents is taught as a matter of form; but, if we look at the conduct of young ladies, we shall see that it is a matter of form only. If a father interferes with the choice of her associates, the grown-up daughter considers it an unjustifiable interference, a piece of parental tyranny that is not to be borne. If the father remains firm, and refuses to admit the chosen friend or

acquaintance to his house, and of course not to allow his daughter to visit his family, it is more than probable that the young lady will take some underhand method of cultivating the acquaintance. A walk in the country, a ramble through some public garden, or a morning visit, by appointment, at the house of a mutual friend, are the not unfrequent means taken to cheat and set at naught the parental authority. What mischief does this engender?—dissimulation in all its branches are the concomitants of this breach of discipline. Perhaps a male acquaintance may be made, and friendship may ripen into love. The case is made known to the angry father, who refuses his consent. If the lovers be inclined to carry disobedience still farther, and marry without his consent, poverty and all its attendant evils may follow in the train. Even under the most mitigated circumstances, stolen matches generally turn out ill. Estranged friends arise on both sides. The young couple are, perhaps, without any friends or acquaintances in the world, living in a state of constant mortification and neglect, and repining and repenting the choice each has made. This is no overdrawn picture of the evils attendant upon disobedience.

Disobedience on the part of a wife to the expressed or implied wishes of her husband is still worse; and yet, it is more lightly thought of than the duty to parents. In this case, not only is there a positive breach of a contract ratified by a solemn oath, and of the direct commands of the Creator, but there is direct worldly misery consequent upon it. The husband becomes jealous, morose, and sullen; perhaps cruel and unjust. It matters not that his commands were unreasonable,—perhaps of a trifling nature,—the evils are the same, and might have been avoided, particularly if they were trifling. We must be understood not to recommend obedience to a husband when that obedience implies a breach of higher duties; but this seldom happens. We are aware that there is a vigorous attempt making to introduce that in all things the two sexes should be put upon an equality. But we trust that the good sense of our countrymen to see that the proposed equality in married life would lead to nothing on the part of the female but increased labor and responsibilities, without an adequate return. Mrs. Jameison recommends that females should depend upon themselves in all cases; and she should have no claim upon her husband's property, nor he upon her's. This is disgusting, and would be hateful, if it were not so utterly ridiculous.

Another very important duty is to relieve the wants of the poor; we do not mean to say that there is any want of charity in the young ladies of the present age, but there is a most woful ignorance as to their peculiar position. We recollect a young married woman of rank in England, of the very best disposition possible, who, by her gross ignorance of life, insulted the whole population

of a village she wished to serve. It was a manufacturing village, and the people, by the failure of a firm to whom they had hitherto been employed, were reduced to great straits. Our lady hearing of their distress, determined to relieve it, and ordered a very large distribution of blankets and linens. Now blankets are very good things, but it was during the dog-days, and the people were starving.

These few but important duties, and undoubtedly of more consequence than almost any other, are totally lost sight of in a modern establishment for young ladies. A female may acquire at one of these places all those accomplishments which adorn life, but none of that knowledge which should enable her to fulfil her duties.

In the days of courtship she will not find out her deficiencies, and the unmitigated flattery and devotion she receives from her lover, tend to make her think herself all perfection. Marriage alters the case completely. Duties of which she had never dreamed press upon her, and which she feels neither competent nor willing to fulfil, and numerous are the mortifications she must endure before she becomes perfectly *au fait* to her new position. Our advice, is that young ladies, while at school, be taught to practise those duties, which in after years will be their especial employment. They may depend upon this, that they will feel more pleasure in the exercise of useful virtues, than in the exhibition of the most brilliant accomplishments. Absence of selfishness—consideration of the wishes of others—will be found to confer more pleasure upon the possessor than the most brilliant talents, and the most elegant accomplishments.
